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Office of Public Affairs  
U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security  
**United States  
Coast Guard**



# Press Release

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## **'DEEPWATER' PROGRAM SCORES FIRST OPERATIONAL SUCCESS WITH CUTTER MATAGORDA**

**\*\*Video from this case is available for pick-up at the Brickell Plaza Federal Building, 909 SE 1st Ave. Please contact (305) 415-6683 to request a copy.\*\***

MIAMI - The Coast Guard Cutter *Matagorda*, on its first operational patrol after going through a major conversion program as part of the Coast Guard's Deepwater Program, stopped a smuggling boat in the Florida Straits attempting to bring 25 Cuban migrants into the country illegally Thursday.

The go-fast was initially spotted by the crew of a C-130 Hercules airplane from Air Station Clearwater, Fla., 40 miles southwest of the Dry Tortugas heading north at high-speed with no lights. *Matagorda* was diverted and assumed the role of on-scene commander to coordinate the interdiction effort.

After a long chase the smuggling boat, operated by two suspected smugglers, was safely stopped two miles south of the Dry Tortugas.

During the chase a second suspect vessel was also spotted by the cutter *Pea Island*. This information was relayed to Customs and Border Protection whose air and marine units located the boat being operated by two possible smugglers.

Both cases are under investigation by the Coast Guard, CBP and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida. The migrants were all repatriated to Bahia de Cabanas, Cuba, today.

To continue to meet America's 21st century maritime threats and challenges, the Coast Guard initiated the Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) Program, the largest and most innovative acquisition in the Coast Guard's history.

One program within Deepwater is the conversion of existing 110-foot patrol boats into the renovated and improved 123-foot maritime patrol boat. *Matagorda* was decommissioned in Miami Jan. 2003, after 17 years of service to become the first ship to go through this program, upgrading its operational capabilities and extending its service life. (Detailed information on the Deepwater program and the 123-foot conversion program can be found at <http://www.uscg.mil/deepwater/system/123.htm>).

*Matagorda* is a 123-foot patrol boat homeported in Key West, Fla.

*Pea Island* is a 110-foot patrol boat homeported in St. Petersburg, Fla.

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